

*What advice would you give to a person interested in Easter Island archaeology or anthropology, (or those fields generally?)*

Easter Island has been the most intensely studied Polynesian island with regards to archaeology and anthropology. Given that, however, if you are interested in pursuing research in Easter Island try to attack a research question from a different angle or approach, try different techniques and/or methodologies, or select uninvestigated sites or undescribed skeletal elements. There is still a great deal more that can be done to further contribute to our understanding of the prehistoric Easter Island people and culture.

*What would you have done if you had not pursued your current line(s) of research and interests?*

If I hadn't been exposed to biological anthropology, forensic anthropology, and Easter Island skeletal biology, it is quite likely I would have remained in the Navy and continued my career as a Surface Line Officer.

*Date and place of birth?*

November 24, 1961. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
BA, Zoology, University of Wyoming, 1984  
MS, Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 1995  
Ph.D., Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2000

## REVIEWS

### DIFFUSIONISM RECONSIDERED: ROUND 2

#### POLYNESIAN SEAFARING AND AMERICAN HORIZONS: A RESPONSE TO JONES AND KLAR

by Atholl Anderson; *American Antiquity*, October 2006, Volume 71, No. 4 pp. 759-763

#### ON OPEN MINDS AND MISSED MARKS: A RESPONSE TO ATHOLL ANDERSON

Terry L. Jones and Kathryn A. Klar; *American Antiquity*, October 2006, Volume 71, No. 4 pp. 765-770

*Review and Discussion by Scott Nicolay*

HAVING EARLIER PROVIDED A REVIEW in this journal of "Diffusionism Reconsidered," the paper by archaeologist Terry Jones and linguist Kathryn Klar in which they presented their argument for prehistoric Polynesian-Chumash contacts, I feel some responsibility to keep our readership up to date on this important line of research as it continues to unfold. The October 2006 issue of *American Antiquity*, the same journal that published the original paper in July 2005, contains the latest round in the debate over whether Polynesians may have made landfall in Southern California

and brought with them the technology of the sewn-plank canoe, with a response to the original paper by Atholl Anderson, and a counter-response to Anderson from Jones and Klar. That this topic would generate at least some discussion should not be a surprise to anyone, but that the first major critique would come from one of the foremost experts on Polynesian seafaring rather than an archaeologist working in North America is a bit unexpected. It even seems to have taken Jones and Klar themselves a bit off-guard.

Atholl Anderson was originally scheduled as one of the discussants at the 2005 Society for American Archaeology symposium in Salt Lake City where Jones and Klar rolled out their full argument and sought input from a wide range of scholars as they prepared their case for publication. He was unable to attend, however, and this is unfortunate, as he would presumably have presented some of his objections at that time, and Jones and Klar could have attempted to address them in the original paper.

Anderson's critique ultimately has more to do with the debates over settlement dates and voyaging capabilities that have so far characterized Polynesian archaeology at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than with the case for trans-Pacific diffusion. In his response, he writes: "Jones and Klar have not understood the extent of my departure from the current consensus about Polynesian seafaring." Anderson is one of the leading figures currently building a case for settlement dates in East Polynesia much later than those that were generally accepted during most of the latter half of the last century. Some RNJ readers will also be familiar with the recent paper by Terry Hunt and Carl Lipo in the journal *Science* that drew similar conclusions based largely on their work on Rapa Nui. Anderson's own words acknowledge his awareness that his views on this topic remain as controversial as Jones and Klar's own argument, if not even more so.

This debate over settlement dates may very likely redefine the paradigm of Polynesian prehistory; however, it is a discussion that has only just begun, and many questions remain to be answered. Jones and Klar are fully justified in basing their own arguments on what remains the accepted view at this point rather than a controversial thesis that had just begun to appear when they were preparing their own case for publication. Even if Anderson is correct in his argument that the settlement of East Polynesia could not have occurred before AD 800-900, those dates still overlap with Jones and Klar's proposed AD 400-800 contact window.

Anderson also questions the possibility of Polynesian-Chumash contact on the basis of his perceptions of prehistoric Polynesian voyaging capabilities. He has been critical of the "reconstructed" Polynesian voyaging canoes such as Hōkule'a employed by Ben Finney and Nainoa Thompson, most notably in his paper "Towards the Sharp End: The Form and Performance of Prehistoric Polynesian Voyaging Canoes," which appeared in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Easter Island and the Pacific*, published by the Easter Island Foundation. The title of that pa-

per is a punning reference to the half-century old “drift theory” of Polynesian settlement proposed by Andrew Sharp. Regardless of whether *Hōkule’a* and other vessels used by the Polynesian Voyaging Society truly represent prehistoric “design specs,” the proof of prehistoric Polynesian voyaging capabilities lies in the actual settlement of Hawai‘i, Rapa Nui, and Anderson’s own homeland of Aotearoa, and the transfer of the sweet potato to Island Oceania from South America. However, Anderson actually refutes even this with the suggestion that the sweet potato was brought to Polynesia aboard South American voyaging craft. For Anderson to throw out such a suggestion as casually as he does is altogether unfair to Jones and Klar, who can hardly be expected to have based their arguments on the discredited theories of Sharp and Heyerdahl.

Ultimately, Anderson comes off as a more radical diffusionist than Jones and Klar, proposing an Asian origin for sewn-plank canoe technology in California and a South American agency for the spread of the sweet potato. As we strive to ground archaeology in solid scientific methods, such disregard of the law of parsimony seems almost negligent. Jones and Klar have already presented a far more simple and elegant explanation of the Chumash data. Should future research continue to support later settlement dates for East Polynesia, their conclusions may need revision, but at the present time they fit well within the generally accepted dates and capabilities for Polynesian activity in the eastern Pacific.

Ironically, diffusion itself seems to be the only part of “Diffusionism Reconsidered” that Anderson accepts. Nonetheless, Jones and Klar begin their reply almost as if they had originally planned to defend their work against a different sort of critique, expecting to be attacked for their diffusionist views, rather than for their agreement with the currently accepted dates for Polynesian settlement. Here they almost make their first misstep, defending diffusionism in general rather than their specific argument. The bulk of available diffusionist arguments does not lend support to any individual case: each argument for diffusion should be weighed on its own strengths, and Jones and Klar have already made a very strong case for theirs. They don’t need to invoke other examples to support it. Their original argument was strong because it was so carefully focused, and this was also what separated it from the untenable claims of scatter-shot diffusionists like Thor Heyerdahl and Barry Fell. Fortunately, Jones and Klar abandon this tack early on and quickly get back on course.

The core of their response with their reiteration of one of the strongest pieces of evidence in their original paper: the anomalous, or “linguistically opaque” Chumash word for the sewn-plank canoe, *tomolo*. Jones and Klar are probably justified in their apparent frustration with Anderson here, as he seems to have ignored their earlier discussion of this term, the centerpiece of Klar’s contribution to the research. Anderson questions why the Chumash would not have adopted some form of *waka*, a common Polynesian word for boat. They address this and Anderson’s assertion

of an Asian origin for the California sewn-plank canoe together: “Our response to both these suggestions is that the Chumash and Gabrieliño borrowed the technique of sewn-plank canoe construction and words related to that technique, not the word for boat or the specific design of a boat.”

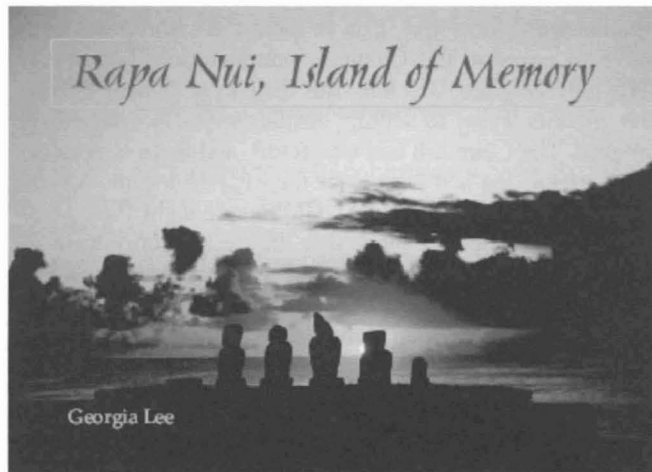
The diffusion of words is even more complicated than the transfer of technologies, as anyone who pursues the etymology of such terms in American English as “dope” and “coney” will quickly discover. It is not simply a question of two groups of people sitting down with their corresponding tourist phrasebooks and deliberately selecting the optimal word for a new idea. In fact, it is anthropologically naïve to envision the Chumash conducting a Tarzan-and-Jane-type language session with their hypothetical Polynesian visitors trying to acquire various terms in each others’ tongues. The Chumash had watercraft, and there is evidence that they had them at least since the early Holocene; it is the Polynesian technology that would have caught their attention. It makes perfect sense that they would only have retained a word for something they did not already have. I addressed this very point in my original review: “Why not some form of *waka*, the ubiquitous Polynesian word for boat? The Chumash already had a word for boat. Here again, the proposed derivation points not so much to the artifact as to the technology, supporting the argument for actual cultural contact.”

From there, Jones and Klar address Anderson’s arguments about chronology and voyaging capabilities, outlining the controversial nature of his views within the overall field of Polynesian prehistory, and presenting the defense that there is still room for their thesis even within his adjusted chronology. They conclude their response with the assertion that Anderson “...makes his case by presenting a very narrow interpretation of eastern Polynesian cultural chronology and by dismissing our linguistic evidence entirely.” I would actually go so far as to say that they offer a more objective critique of Anderson’s work than he does of theirs. In this reviewer’s opinion, “Diffusionism Reconsidered” has successfully survived the first round of debate.

It is, however, only the first round. This April, Jones and Klar will present their latest research at the 2007 Society for American Archaeology meeting in Austin, Texas. Meanwhile, news comes that researchers have discovered the bones of Southeast-Asian [i.e. Polynesian] chickens in excavations in South America, DNA-tested and radiocarbon dated to AD 1300. Diffusion, one of many important concepts in archaeology that have been shoved aside by a generation of emphasis on settlement, subsistence, and material analysis, may be about to reenter the mainstream of archaeology. As it is also a topic that continues to capture the imagination of the public, it is time that serious archaeologists took back control of it.

Serious arguments for limited diffusion with *Polynesian* voyagers as the active agents of contact with the New World are not going to go away, and now that their chief proponents are legitimate and even distinguished anthro-

pologists such as Terry Jones, Kathryn Klar, and Roger Green, it is inevitable that the case for Polynesian contacts with the New World will provide data that must be considered within the overall discussion of Polynesian activity in the eastern Pacific. Atholl Anderson, Terry Jones, Kathryn Klar and the other archaeologists mentioned in this review are all working simultaneously to reshape the study of Polynesian prehistory, and it is from the dialogue between their ideas that the future of the discipline will emerge. Chinese proverbs aside, I would say we are lucky to live in interesting times. 3



### **Rapa Nui, Island of Memory**

by Georgia Lee

Easter Island Foundation, 2006

ISBN 1-880636-23-9

*Review by Paul G. Bahn*

THIS DELIGHTFUL BOOK is aptly described as a love letter to the people of Rapa Nui and their island. Richly illustrated with photographs and the author's own drawings, it is not a chronological account of her association with the island, but rather a tapestry of tales arranged thematically around a host of characters and topics.

Georgia Lee first visited Rapa Nui in June 1981, at a time when she was emerging from a bad marriage and starting a new life and career. Her research project on Rapa Nui's rock art was to last more than six years, and produced – in addition to a classic monograph – not only an abiding and passionate love for the place and its inhabitants, but also eventually a new man in her life.

Before she arrived, the island's rock art was known from only a few sites: Henri Lavachery, during the Franco-Belgian expedition of the 1930s, had mostly sketched motifs from horseback and reported 209 petroglyphs. Georgia and her crews, through painstaking and often arduous systematic survey of caves, rocks and outcrops, recorded around 4000, as well as thousands of cup-marks. The rock art proved to be so abundant and varied – indeed easily the richest in the Pacific – that she was, alas, unable to include

the *moai* in her study, and had to leave them to the attentions of others.

The book really highlights the changes of all kinds that she has seen on the island over the past 25 years. At the first, there were few, very primitive, amenities and dusty roads. Now it is a very different place in many ways. She tells numerous stories, including that of the infamous Hollywood movie, to illustrate the multiple strange twists and turns of modern Rapa Nui history. There has been damage to the archaeology, such as vandalism of petroglyphs; projects like the Tongariki reconstruction; and all kinds of crazy schemes from lighthouses to revolving restaurants to golf courses.

The author's cascade of memories inevitably revolves around islanders she knows well and loves, but she maintains a healthy skepticism about their frequent tales of lost caves and so forth. She vividly conveys something of the trials and tribulations of running a field project in a remote location, and of the wide range of types who came as volunteers. We also get brief accounts of major names like Mulloy and Heyerdahl, as well as some of the nuttier theories that the island's archaeology constantly inspires.

I believe it is obvious to all specialists and indeed all true Rapanuiphiles that it is Georgia Lee who has become the "matriach" of the island through her unrivalled all-encompassing knowledge of its culture, both past and present; her continuing passion for helping the islanders, not least through the establishment of the Easter Island Foundation; and, of course, through the creation of this *Journal*, unquestionably the single most important source of information about Easter Island. Although she is hugely different in so many ways from the redoubtable Katherine Routledge, one can certainly say that Georgia Lee – in terms of both scholarship and concern for the island – is Routledge's true successor, and her very enjoyable and readable memoirs cannot be recommended highly enough.

Dare one hope that in the future she might produce a second edition in which she names more names and employs less discretion?!?

### **TATTOO TRADITIONS OF HAWAII**

by Tricia Allen

Mutual Publishing, Honolulu

2006; ISBN 1-56647-770-0

218 pages, 133 figures, soft-cover. Price \$ 17.95

[www.tattootraditions.alohaworld.com](http://www.tattootraditions.alohaworld.com)

*Review by Sidsel Millerstrom*

I AM DELIGHTED THAT TRICIA ALLEN, with her unique experiences as an anthropologist and a practicing tattoo artist, has used her wealth of knowledge to weave the complex cultural tapestry of ancient and contemporary tattoo practices into a book. Her sensitivity to Hawaiian socio-cultural issues is evident throughout her work. Research on ancient tattoos is not an easy subject to investigate for tattoo motifs, similar to rock art, have layers of meaning in the Hawaiian